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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS #33: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC -- AS A FAILED STATE, ACCORDING TO FP

¶1. (SBU) The following is number 33 in our series on the first year of Leonel Fernandez's administration.

Does the sum of the parts add up? Or has the journal "Foreign Policy" lost its mind?

A comment from an Embassy colleague, July 5:

I arrived home last night after two weeks of leave. On the trip and at arrival I encountered nothing out of the ordinary. When I arrived home my wife called me and said that she had read that "Foreign Policy" listed the Dominican Republic on its first annual "failed states" index. I was surprised.

On the ride home I had asked my cab driver if there was anything noteworthy in the news. He mentioned the President had been traveling, but that was it. No mention that the state had failed while I was away. When I downloaded the list (see below) I was astonished that not only was the Dominican Republic high on the list, number 19, but that it was the third highest ranked nation in the hemisphere -- behind Haiti (#10) and Colombia (#14), two countries experiencing ongoing civil violence.

A country's score in this exercise is determined by an aggregation of 12 indices, scaled 1-10. The Dominican Republic's highest score was for "deterioration of public services," for which it received a 9.6 out of possible 10. That score was worse than all of the countries above it (or below it, depending on point of view) on the list except Somalia (a perfect 10 as it is not a functioning state), Haiti (9.8), and North Korea (9.7). Amazingly, Liberia scores an 8.2 in this measure -- a country that has not, according to "The Economist," paid civil servants in years.

The next highest (worst) score for the Dominicans is a 9.2 on the measure of "rise of factionalized elites." This score is equal or higher than several countries that are convulsed in full-blown civil wars and that have UN peacekeepers keeping the "factionalized elites" from killing each other.

Another black mark was a Dominican score of 9.2 on the measure of "widespread violation of human rights." Everyone agrees that human rights protection can be improved here. But of the top 19 countries, the Dominican score is a number higher than those for the others except top ranked (worst-ranked) Cote d'Ivoire. Yes, the index implies, based on score, that respect for human rights is worse in the Dominican Republic than in North Korea, a country with verifiable gulags, and worse than in several countries that have recently experienced full-blown genocides.

I have spent considerable time studying social sciences and, I understand that when constructing a list such as the one in "Foreign Policy" one cannot possibly be an expert on all of the countries on it. But having lived in the Dominican Republic for the past year, it seems inescapable to me that many of the indices for the Dominican Republic are patently absurd. If so, then "Foreign Policy" and the Carnegie Institute for Peace should completely revamp the methodology for constructing the "failed states" list.

On the other hand, if "Foreign Policy" is right, then the Department of State should reexamine whether the current hardship differential of 20 percent accurately reflects the fact that we are living in a state teetering on the brink of failure.

¶2. (U) Research and drafting by Daniel O'Connor.

¶3. (U) This piece and others may be consulted on our SIPRNET site, <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo> along with extensive other material.

HERTELL